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New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Tribute to the memory of Laurent-Désiré Kabila, late President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The President: Before turning to the items on its agenda for this morning, the Assembly will pay a tribute to the memory of the late President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, His Excellency Mr. Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who passed away on 18 January 2001. On behalf of the General Assembly, I should like to convey our condolences to the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to the bereaved family of President Kabila.

I invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Laurent-Désiré Kabila.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

Earthquakes in El Salvador, India and Pakistan

The President: Also before turning to the items on our agenda, may I, on behalf of the members of the Assembly, extend to the Governments and the peoples of El Salvador, India and Pakistan, recently struck by disastrous earthquakes, our deepest sympathy for the tragic loss of life and the extensive material damage. May I also express the hope that the international community will demonstrate its solidarity by responding promptly and generously to any request from El Salvador, India or Pakistan for assistance in their present plight.

Agenda item 122 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/55/745)

The President: I should like to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/55/745. It contains a letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly, in which the Secretary-General informs the Assembly that 38 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter. I should like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years".

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in document A/55/745?

It was so decided.

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Agenda item 20 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Draft resolution (A/55/L.72)

The President: I call on the representative of Colombia to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.72.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.72 on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and of the following other sponsors of the draft resolution: Andorra, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Fiji, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritius, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, the Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Yugoslavia. The draft resolution is entitled "Assistance to El Salvador as a result of the earthquake of 13 January 2001".

For our region, today's meeting of the General Assembly is a manifestation of solidarity with our brethren in El Salvador. The Latin American and Caribbean region is once again suffering, owing to the forces of nature; our Salvadoran brothers and sisters must now face the painful and irreparable loss of hundreds of lives and widespread damage to their country's infrastructure, all caused by the earthquake of 13 January.

By the draft resolution before it, the Assembly would recognize the large-scale efforts made by the Government of El Salvador to alleviate the suffering of the earthquake victims and to meet their immediate needs. It would also recognize and welcome the support and solidarity offered by the international community.

The draft resolution further highlights the enormous efforts that have been made by the people and the Government of El Salvador to build peace and democracy and to achieve a favourable environment for promoting economic growth and furthering human development. In that connection, the draft resolution highlights the grave consequences of natural disasters for economic and social development in the developing countries, and the considerable amounts of resources required to overcome the damage they cause.

The draft resolution urges all Member States, specialized agencies and other organizations and organs of the United Nations system, together with international financial institutions, to continue responding generously to rehabilitation and reconstruction tasks and programmes for El Salvador. Finally, it requests the Secretary-General to make every effort to continue mobilizing and coordinating the humanitarian assistance being provided by the specialized agencies and other organizations and organs of the United Nations system in support of the efforts of the Government of El Salvador.

My delegation, El Salvador and the other co-sponsoring States trust that draft resolution A/55/L.72 will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Andino Salazar (El Salvador) *(spoke in Spanish)*: I should like to convey to you, Mr. President, the gratitude of the Government of El Salvador for the prompt convening of this meeting of the General Assembly to consider, within the framework of item 20(b) of the agenda of the fifty-fifth session, the draft resolution entitled "Assistance to El Salvador as a result of the earthquake of 13 January 2001" (A/55/L.72). The draft was submitted by the Permanent Representative of Colombia on behalf of the co-sponsors, to whom we are deeply grateful. We hope that we can count on the other Member States' valuable support for the draft.

I should like also to convey the gratitude of the people and the Government of El Salvador to the Secretary-General, the various agencies of the United Nations system and all Member States for their expressions of sympathy and their solidarity with, and support for, El Salvador, and for having set out, with great dedication and resolve, to render assistance to victims and to cooperate in the other activities

associated with the emergency situation that our country is facing.

I wish to express the solidarity of the people and the Government of El Salvador with the people and the Government of India and of Pakistan in connection with the loss of human life and the damage caused by today's earthquake.

As all representatives are aware, on Saturday, 13 January 2001, at 11.36 hours, an earthquake measuring 7.9 on the Richter scale struck a large part of the territory of El Salvador, causing the loss of hundreds of human lives, leaving thousands of people wounded and homeless, and causing serious damage to the country's infrastructure. The Government of El Salvador immediately activated the appropriate institutional mechanisms to search for, rescue and evacuate the victims of the earthquake and to rehabilitate the roads. It also created a commission, made up of members of the executive organ and of private companies, known as the National Solidarity Commission (CONASOL). Its goal is to assist the Government in receiving the goods and services that have been supplied in connection with the emergency; coordinating the reclassification of such assistance; delivering it; and ensuring that it is used for its intended purpose.

To this end, the Government of El Salvador has engaged the services of two highly regarded international private auditing firms, and CONASOL has requested the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to handle the purchases to be made with the donated funds. We therefore have three mechanisms for transparency: foreign private auditors, UNDP and the country's Court of Audit.

I should like also to highlight the many demonstrations of national and international solidarity as well as the emergency assistance supplied by international cooperation agencies, friendly Governments and the Salvadoran community abroad, which have been vital in helping us to handle the emergency situation resulting from the earthquake.

At present, the Government of El Salvador has begun the second stage of the process of rehabilitating and reconstructing the country. Among its objectives are recovering inhabitable space, promoting employment and reactivating the local economy, restoring the social fabric and local governance, and lending support to local governments and their communities for local development.

In order to attain this goal, the Government of El Salvador has started a decentralization process with respect to the donations coming from abroad, sending them directly to the 97 municipalities most affected by the earthquake. Thus mayors now are responsible for distributing to each community and home in their municipalities the assistance rendered by the international community. Within the context of this decentralization process, the Government of El Salvador is providing funds and tools to municipalities so that they can clear debris and rebuild homes, in cooperation with the communities involved.

It is also important to stress the efforts of the Government of El Salvador to prepare a detailed technical assessment of the damage caused by the earthquake in order to elaborate the reconstruction projects and programmes that will be submitted to the donor community soon for its consideration.

We are certain that the international community will continue to support, in a spirit of solidarity, the people and the Government of El Salvador in this new stage of the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the affected areas in the country, with the same dedication and clear demonstrations of generosity and understanding with respect to the human and material tragedy that the Salvadorans are facing. This has provided us with the opportunity, in the face of adversity, to redouble efforts to foster national unity and strengthen democratic institutions, and to promote activities aimed at the economic growth and social development of the country, which we had begun before this natural disaster struck, in order to preserve the political, economic and social stability that had been achieved.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate the profound gratitude of the people and the Government of El Salvador to the international community for its support and solidarity at this time of national emergency. We are committed to making ever-greater efforts in order to overcome as soon as possible the adverse conditions facing the people affected by the earthquake. We wish also to reiterate the commitment and political will of the Government of El Salvador to increase its efforts to rehabilitate the affected areas, in the spirit of perseverance and dedication that

characterizes the Salvadorans and with the solidarity and support of the international community.

Mr. Navarrete (Mexico) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Only a few months ago, our heads of State or Government at the historic Millennium Summit decided to make every effort possible to ensure that persons suffering disproportionately from the consequences of natural disasters, especially children and other particularly vulnerable groups, would receive the assistance and protection they require in order to return to their normal lives as soon as possible. They also decided to intensify cooperation with the purpose of reducing the number and the effects of these catastrophes.

Today the General Assembly is meeting to give new proof of international solidarity. On 13 January El Salvador had to face an earthquake of great intensity and extent, with devastating consequences. Through you, Mr. President, I wish to ask the delegation of El Salvador to transmit to its Government and the noble people of that country the renewal of our sincere feelings of condolences and solidarity for the painful loss of human life and our commitment to continue collaborating in the efforts of rehabilitation and reconstruction. For the emergency stage, Mexico responded promptly to the call by El Salvador. Hours after hearing of the magnitude of the earthquake, my Government ordered the immediate dispatch of a contingent of 150 people to help in search and rescue activities and in the re-establishment of provisions for sanitation, shelter, food preparation and communications.

The frequency and magnitude of natural disasters are a cause of particular concern to Mexico. In the past few years, we have encouraged the General Assembly to consider this issue as a priority. Mexico is convinced of the fact that, on the basis of resolutions adopted in 1999 and 2000, it is important to persevere in the establishment of an ample, creative and effective strategy so that responses of countries, regions and forums to these situations may not be just isolated on case-by-case efforts. We are all witnesses to the lamentable consequences of natural catastrophes.

This morning we received the news that the western part of the Indian subcontinent has fallen victim to another violent earthquake. The first reports have already mentioned hundreds of victims and many other affected people, as well as serious material damage. I ask the delegations of India and Pakistan to transmit to their Governments and peoples our expression of solidarity in view of this tragedy.

The facts continue to show the urgent need for efficient mechanisms that can be depended on to give a rapid and timely response to affected populations. Thus, it is required that we forge ahead in perfecting a system to mobilize, channel and utilize international assistance in all stages — prevention, early warning, emergency, mitigation, rehabilitation and construction. The United Nations must play a fundamental role in this task. Mexico will continue to work with other countries interested in this topic in order to fulfil this objective. We would like to invite Member States and the Secretariat to increase their efforts to give this matter the urgent attention it deserves.

With the support of the United Nations, El Salvador was able to attain peace. Now its Government and people, with talent and dedication, are working in the construction of political, economic and social development that is democratic, open and inclusive. This enormous effort today requires a generous contribution on the part of the international community and the international and regional organizations and institutions in order to face the emergency and overcome its consequences as soon as possible.

The delegation of Mexico hopes that the draft resolution that we have before us, which my delegation has co-sponsored, is adopted unanimously as a new sign of solidarity of the United Nations with the noble and courageous people of El Salvador.

Mr. Lancry (Israel): The earthquake which struck El Salvador on 13 January is a tragedy of immense human proportions. It has claimed hundreds of lives, has left thousands wounded and homeless and has inflicted devastating damage on property and infrastructure. Such a disaster beckons the international community to act immediately to provide relief and supplies to those who are suffering.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, the Israeli Foreign Ministry dispatched a medical team and a shipment of medicines and medical supplies to assist the victims. The delegation was led by the Director of the Foreign Ministry's Latin America Division, Mr. Alex Ben-Zvi, and the Director of the Schneider Hospital Trauma Center, Dr. Yehezkel Waisman.

The Israeli delegation also conveyed a letter from Prime Minister Barak to President Francisco Flores Pérez of El Salvador in which the Prime Minister expressed the solidarity of the people of Israel with the people of El Salvador. In addition, the Israeli humanitarian aid organization known as Latet, meaning "to give", has collected approximately 22 tons of clothing, blankets and assorted aid for homeless refugees in El Salvador.

Israeli assistance to El Salvador reflects a long history of partnership, cooperation and friendship between our two nations. The close relationship between the Jewish people and El Salvador dates back more than half a century to the Second World War, when El Salvador was one of the few countries in the world which actively tried to save European Jews threatened by Hitler's regime.

In recent years, Israel and El Salvador have succeeded in establishing close cultural, economic and commercial relations. Israel shared in the joy of the people of El Salvador when peace finally triumphed after a long and devastating civil war. Israel was proud to send observers to oversee the first open election in El Salvador, in 1994. Over the years, Israel has offered training to Salvadoran professionals in a number of important fields.

Our assistance to El Salvador also stems from a strong Israeli tradition of providing humanitarian aid and relief in every corner of the globe in times of emergency and after natural disasters.

Following in this tradition, Israel is honoured to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/55/L.72, entitled "Assistance to El Salvador as a result of the earthquake of 13 January 2001". We are privileged to be able to offer assistance to the Government of El Salvador as it struggles to cope with the devastation wrought by that earthquake. We strongly encourage other Member States to act with determination to provide assistance and relief to the greatest extent possible. It is our hope that, with a concerted international effort, the human tragedy can be curtailed and the pain and misery quickly overcome and that El Salvador will once again be able to focus its energies on development and building a future of peace and prosperity for its noble people.

Mr. Hume (United States of America): On behalf of the citizens of the United States, I would like to express our deepest sympathy at the enormous losses suffered by the people of El Salvador as a result of the earthquake of 13 January. Today's devastating earthquake in India reminds us that no country in the world is immune from such disasters. They underline our common humanity and unite us in efforts to cope with the destruction they leave behind.

The United States is assisting in the disaster response effort in El Salvador. We have deployed members of our Miami Dade Fire Department to help develop site plans for search and rescue and to assist with safety measures, and we have provided a total of $5.7 million in humanitarian assistance and supplies. We realize, however, that no amount of aid can erase the pain and anguish felt by the El Salvadoran people. We will continue to assist El Salvador, and we hope other members of the United Nations will do the same.

My Government commends the European Space Agency, the Global Disaster Information Network and the ReliefWeb web site of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their invaluable work in sharing important operational information. These efforts save lives because they provide information vital to those who deliver blankets, food and medical supplies. We urge adherence to the spirit of the Tampere Convention on the Provision of Emergency Telecommunication Resources; without telecommunications, relief workers cannot get the information they need. We look forward to discussing these topics, and how to build an effective international disaster strategy, at the Summit of the Americas in April in Canada.

During the fall portion of this General Assembly session, we passed resolution 55/163, which recognized the terrible impact that natural disasters have on our global community. That resolution stressed the importance of working to prepare for and recover from such events and recommended specific actions in the areas of disaster mitigation, sustainable development, response and preparedness. The recent disaster in El Salvador demonstrates the urgent need to recommit ourselves to these goals, and to the spirit of international cooperation in all phases of our work.

Mr. Schori (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The Central and Eastern European countries associated with European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus,

Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area — Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway — align themselves with this statement.

The EU has been profoundly moved by the loss of human lives and the damage caused by the recent earthquake in El Salvador. The EU expresses its deepest sympathy for the victims and their families. The EU responded immediately, and will continue to address, in a concrete way, the urgent needs of the affected population and to consider rehabilitation and long-term reconstruction activities.

The EU would like to emphasize the importance of efficient coordination among donors and international organizations in supporting the relief and reconstruction efforts of the national authorities and local organizations. In addition to immediate relief and humanitarian assistance, it is already essential at this stage to organize support for long-term reconstruction and development, including the further strengthening of local response capacities.

The special Consultative Group meeting that has provisionally been scheduled to take place at the end of February will provide an opportunity for El Salvador and the international community to further coordinate joint efforts in an efficient manner.

Finally, the EU welcomes the draft resolution to be adopted on assistance to El Salvador and is proud to join the list of sponsors.

Mr. Manele (Solomon Islands): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the States members of the Pacific Island Forum represented at the United Nations in New York: Australia, Fiji, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu and my own country, Solomon Islands.

At the outset, I would like to express our sincere condolences to the families of the victims of the earthquake which struck India and Pakistan this morning, and to their Governments.

We wish to convey our deepest sympathy to the Government and the people of El Salvador for the loss of hundreds of human lives and the extensive material damage as a result of the earthquake on 13 January 2001. As a subregion that is extremely vulnerable and prone to natural disasters, and given our knowledge and experience of human suffering resulting from the unavoidable forces of nature, we sincerely join others in expressing our support for and solidarity with the Government and the people of El Salvador in their efforts to cope with the serious human and material consequences of the disaster.

We support the Secretary-General's appeal for international assistance to El Salvador. Contributions, including emergency humanitarian relief provided by Member States, United Nations specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations, will bring comfort to the people of El Salvador during this difficult period. As many have stressed, urgent needs and concerns include shelter, food, medical supplies, clothing and safe drinking water. El Salvador needs concerted international support as it begins its rehabilitation and reconstruction. The United Nations has demonstrated its comparative advantage in soliciting international attention and mobilizing a concerted and timely response to such situations.

Finally, the increasing incidence and magnitude of natural disasters confirms the need for and importance of efficient coordination at all levels in disaster preparedness and emergency response; information-sharing and early warning systems to mitigate the impact of natural disasters; and, above all, a ready pool of resources, including financial resources that can be deployed and utilized immediately, thus minimizing human suffering. All these aspects are contained in General Assembly resolution 54/233, "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters from relief to development". Our countries collectively endorsed this resolution and, in the same spirit, support the consensus adoption of the draft resolution on El Salvador.

Mr. Mladenovic (Yugoslavia): On behalf of the members of the Group of Eastern European States, I have the honour to make a statement on the draft resolution entitled "Assistance to El Salvador as a result of the earthquake of 13 January 2001", contained in document A/55/L.72 under agenda item 20 (b).

I wish to convey the deep sympathy of the Group of Eastern European States to the Government and people of El Salvador at the tragic loss of human lives and the extensive destruction of property and infrastructure caused by the earthquake of 13 January 2001 and its aftershocks.

The extensive media coverage of the earthquake has provided us with the sense of the extent of the devastation to El Salvador. It has been reported that more than 700 people lost their lives, that over 4,000 are injured and that about 75,000 homes have been completely destroyed and more than 100,000 damaged. Some 500,000 people have been left homeless. This natural disaster will undoubtedly pose a major setback to the economy of El Salvador.

Many countries that have suffered natural disasters themselves know first-hand the devastating effects of such events, particularly their calamitous impact on economic and social development efforts, infrastructure, health and the general welfare of the population. The international community, which has responded swiftly and generously in El Salvador's hour of crisis, must stay the course because the tasks of rehabilitation and reconstruction will be as daunting as those of immediate relief.

The members of the Group of Eastern European States support the appeal made by the authorities of El Salvador and the Secretary-General to the international community for assistance to El Salvador in dealing with this crisis. Indeed, some countries of our region have already contributed in terms of financial and other means to help to mitigate the effects of the catastrophe. It is imperative that all countries, specialized agencies of the United Nations, international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations respond urgently and provide emergency relief, as well as assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of El Salvador.

In that spirit, the Group of Eastern European States supports the adoption of the draft resolution entitled "Assistance to El Salvador as a result of the earthquake of 13 January 2001", contained in document A/55/L.72.

Mr. Duarte (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): As we all know, a devastating earthquake struck the Republic of El Salvador on 13 January, causing more than 725 deaths, according to preliminary figures, and affecting one out of every six Salvadorans. Through the destruction of housing, public and private buildings and infrastructure, it set back that nation's development by 20 years.

The magnitude of the disaster, compounding the consequences of the painful civil war recently fought in that country, is enormous. According to figures released two days ago by the President of El Salvador, Mr. Francisco Flores Pérez, 75,643 housing units were completely destroyed; 639 public buildings have been damaged; and landslides on the Pan-American Highway have disrupted land communications with neighbouring countries. According to officials of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, losses in agriculture amount to more than $116 million.

The international community has supported El Salvador's efforts in the early stages of emergency rescue and the evacuation of victims. This support includes a humanitarian rescue unit of the Nicaraguan army, including physicians and paramedics, who are doing commendable work in disaster areas and have delivered medicine and other emergency assistance. In a gesture of solidarity, the President of Nicaragua visited devastated areas in El Salvador, such as the suburb of Las Colinas.

Despite the help which El Salvador has received and continues to receive, the Salvadoran solidarity commission in charge of emergency assistance logistics does not have sufficient resources indefinitely to help the victims, who have so many needs. El Salvador will require long-term international assistance. Cleaning up the debris, building emergency housing, feeding the thousands of people living in temporary shelters and rehabilitating agriculture and infrastructure, inter alia, represent the early phases of the country's reconstruction and require urgent resources, including technical and financial assistance, to complement national efforts. We hope that, as in the case of other disasters that have occurred in the Central American region, international assistance will continue to flow in sufficient amounts until the damage caused by the earthquake is overcome.

My delegation expresses its solidarity with the Government and the fraternal people of El Salvador at this time of pain and mourning, and it supports the call made by President Flores for a renegotiation of El Salvador's external debt with the international community. We are also confident that draft resolution A/55/L.72, which we have co-sponsored, will be adopted without the need for a vote.

Mr. Mra (Myanmar): We were all shocked and grieved to learn of the devastating earthquake that struck El Salvador on 13 January 2001, affecting more than one million people, with some 500,000 rendered

homeless, and causing serious damage to the country's infrastructure. Countless earthquake victims, living in precarious conditions in temporary and make-shift shelters and highly vulnerable to outbreaks of diseases, are in urgent need of relief and emergency assistance. We commend the efforts made by the Government of El Salvador in attending to the immediate needs of the disaster victims and to alleviate their suffering.

However, national efforts alone are not sufficient in the face of this monumental problem resulting from the disastrous earthquake. National efforts need to be complemented by emergency assistance from the international community to enable the Government to carry out the rehabilitation and reconstruction process. In this regard, we commend all those organizations and members of the international community that have responded generously to the needs of the Government and people of El Salvador.

On behalf of the member States of the Asian Group, I would like to convey our solidarity and support to the Government and people of El Salvador in this difficult hour. We extend our full sympathy, understanding and encouragement to the victims of the disaster. We would also like to convey our best wishes to the Government and people of El Salvador for a speedy recovery and success in their rehabilitation and reconstruction endeavours.

Today we learned of yet another earthquake that hit India and Pakistan. We would like to convey our deepest condolences and expression of solidarity to the Governments and peoples of India and Pakistan for the loss of life and damages.

Mr. Duval (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canadians were shocked by the news of the disastrous earthquake that struck El Salvador and Guatemala on 13 January. We offer the peoples and Governments of these countries our deepest sympathy, as well as to India and Pakistan, which have just been struck by the same tragedy.

Given the extent of the damage caused in El Salvador, the Government of Canada immediately responded by donating $1 million in humanitarian aid to assist the earthquake victims. Two Canadian cargo planes containing 30 tons of emergency relief supplies also arrived in San Salvador on 15 January. On 17 January Canada announced an additional contribution of $1 million to be utilized by the local non-governmental organizations to help with continuing emergency efforts. In response to the appeal of the Canadian Red Cross, the citizens of my country have given $555,000 to date to aid the people of El Salvador. Canada will continue to work together with the Salvadoran authorities and other partners to ease the suffering of the Salvadoran people. Canada is honoured to join the sponsors of draft resolution A/55/L.72.

Events in El Salvador and those more recently in India and Pakistan tragically remind us that the international community continues to face serious humanitarian challenges. In past years, the international humanitarian aid system has had to cope with enormous multiple pressures. The scope of these emergencies is placing considerable strain on the capacity of the global system to respond. It highlights the importance not only of working together in providing assistance to people in need, but also of using our experience to put in place preventive measures to mitigate the devastation and the loss of life caused by natural disasters.

Finally, Canada pledges its full cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, other United Nations agencies, humanitarian organizations and all United Nations members in this undertaking.

The President: We have heard the last speaker before the decision-making on this item. Before we take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors of A/55/L.72: Armenia, Australia, Bhutan, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, France, Gabon, Italy, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, San Marino, Slovenia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.72, entitled "Assistance to El Salvador as a result of the earthquake of 13 January 2001". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.72?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 55/240).

The President: I call on the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Arrouchi (Morocco): I take the floor just to draw attention to the fact that the Kingdom of Morocco

has co-sponsored the draft resolution. Unfortunately, we did not hear the name of Morocco among the names of the countries that have just been listed.

Mr. Sharma (India): We joined in sponsoring the draft resolution on assistance to El Salvador as a result of the earthquake of 13 January 2001 out of a sense of sympathy and solidarity. We now find ourselves affected by the same devastation.

I would like to express appreciation for the words of sympathy and concern expressed by you, Mr. President. I thank also the delegations of Canada, El Salvador, Mexico, Myanmar, the Solomon Islands on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum, and the United States, as well as other States Members of the United Nations, for their expressions of sympathy and solidarity with regard to the death and destruction caused by the earthquake that struck the western part of our country earlier today.

While the tragic loss of life is irreparable, the Government has mobilized rescue, relief and rehabilitation measures on an emergency basis. I once again express our gratitude for the unity which has been voiced by the international community.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 20.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.